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ABSTRACT

An instructional module designed to help prepare college-level teaching assistants (TAs) for their duties in second language instruction is presented. The module's purpose is to broaden the concept of culture in language teaching beyond the focus traditionally found in college and university foreign language departments, using a behavioral and social science approach and accommodating two trends in second language learning and teaching: the inclusion of culture content in the new national standards for K-12 foreign language teaching, and the restructuring of college language programs to meet the interests of students who seek to use a second language in wider, interdisciplinary contexts. Sections address these topics: the definition of culture; different approaches to culture (belles-lettres, social sciences, foreign language); establishing expected learning outcomes for cultural education; determining the cultural content of language courses; classroom techniques for teaching culture; and assessing cultural learning. Contains 76 references. (MSE)

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The Teaching of Culture in Foreign Language Courses

Dale L. Lange
University of Minnesota

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Grace Stovall Burkart, Editor
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, DC

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Introduction

My purpose in this module is to broaden the concept of culture in language teaching beyond the focus traditionally found in college and university foreign language departments. The usual practice has been to adopt a belletristic approach, emphasizing the "high culture" of arts and letters. The broader approach which I advocate here is motivated by and includes the work of the behavioral and social scientists, who have shown how culture pervades every aspect of our lives. Moreover, it is in keeping with two current trends in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. First, the new national standards for the teaching of foreign languages from kindergarten through twelfth grade incorporate an extended understanding of culture (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; Lafayette, 1996). Second, many university foreign language departments are restructuring their programs to meet the interests of students who seek to use a foreign language in wider, interdisciplinary contexts (Berman et al., 1996).

I will consider the following topics in this discussion: defining the concept of culture, establishing expected outcomes for the learning of culture, determining the cultural content of language courses, teaching culture, and assessing cultural learning. I will also briefly examine three college foreign language textbooks within the frame of reference established in earlier sections. At appropriate intervals, I will provide study questions for you to talk about with fellow teaching assistants and other colleagues. The module ends with suggested readings in which you can explore certain topics in greater depth.

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What Is Culture?

Defining culture poses significant problems for those, including this writer, who attempt it, largely because of its complexity. There is not one definition that covers the concept completely. Academic inquiry from several disciplines offers differing perspectives on the meaning of culture, two of which are presented here: the belles-lettres or fine arts tradition and the social sciences view. The section ends with the foreign language education perspective, raising questions about what the learning of culture means in the context of learning a language.

The belles-lettres or fine arts perspective

Brooks (1960) referred to the belletristic perspective of culture as "refinement," referencing the best in mind, taste, and manners and including mankind's highest intellectual attainments as embodied in the fine arts (painting, sculpture, dance, music) and literature. This traditional perspective, with its emphasis on "high culture" (as opposed to "popular culture"), continues to exist in college and university foreign language departments because the academy purposefully intends to represent the culture's highest achievements. There may be another reason as well. The emphasis on high culture lends greater intellectual status to the language and literature department, elevating it above the ranks of language teaching institutes.

The social sciences perspective on culture (discussed in more detail below), although lacking the long history of the belletristic perspective, nevertheless has come to exert considerable influence. It is not uncommon to find the two perspectives in contention within the same language department. The tension between these two views is well illustrated in Steele and Suozzo's (1994) reference work on the teaching of French culture. On the one hand, they state that "The affirmation of popular culture throughout the seventies and eighties was clearly a compelling necessity" (p. 101). But the authors continue their discussion by pointing out what they see as a potential danger of too much emphasis on popular culture: the reduction of cultural data to "tourist information" or a kind of "simplistic folklore" (pp. 101-102). As a final validation of their argument for more emphasis on high culture, the authors assert "Furthermore, the French themselves have always accorded a special place to high culture—which they normally call *civilisation*—in their own self-assessment and self-valorization. To ignore high culture would require us to refuse to define the French fully, for it would be disregarding a key element of their overall culture" (p. 102).

As you can see, the definition of culture can be an emotional issue. However, it is useful to remember that there is wide variety among language learners, and they are found in language programs from kindergarten to graduate school, as well as outside academe. These learners do not all have the same needs. You may wish to consult other sources on this matter: Berman et al. (1996); Kramsch (1993, 1994); and Krueger and Ryan (1993).

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The social sciences perspective

Again, Brooks (1960) has probably best characterized the social sciences perspective on culture, which he defines as "the sum of all the learned and shared elements that characterize a societal group" (p. 80). In other words, culture is the "total way of life of the group" (p. 80). Each person belongs to several cultures simultaneously (the larger societal group, community, work, and home as examples), whose patterns are learned more implicitly than explicitly. Culture includes a value system and practiced ways of believing and of behaving, most of which are informally learned. Other aspects include shared knowledge of meanings, events, products, and actions (Byram, 1989; Hall, 1966). Language provides the means for understanding, sharing, and negotiating meaning for all aspects of culture and is itself an aspect of culture (Sapir, 1964). Thus the social sciences conceptualization of culture embraces the belles-lettres perspective and extends it to include language, values, behavior patterns, events, and products—including the products of high culture. This overlap in concept and inquiry between the belletristic and social sciences approaches to culture makes it possible to accommodate both high culture and popular culture in the same course. Other resources on this issue for you to explore are Damen (1987, pp. 73-96) and Seelye (1994, pp. 14-25).

Social sciences contributing to a broader understanding of culture and its impact on language include sociolinguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, and social psychology.

Sociolinguistics studies how language varies within its social or cultural context, investigating the importance of that context in communicative interactions. Sociolinguists examine how discourse is affected by the interlocutors' individual status (age, sex, educational level, ethnic group, geographical origin), roles in relation to each other (parent-child, doctor-patient, salesperson-customer, more intimate relationships), and social status (social standing, power, authority). Sociolinguists also investigate the development and variability in learners' language (called *interlanguage*) as they learn a second language within a cultural context. Interlanguage studies explore not only the factors of individual status, roles, and social status, but also the contributions of the first language to the development of competence in the second. Useful resources on this subject are: Fearing (1954); Moorjani and Field (1988); Preston (1989); Pride (1979); Spolsky (1989); and Tarone (1988).

In **psychology**, the work of Triandis et al. (1972) demonstrates how individuals' culturally determined view of the world clashes with other world views. An individual's subjective reality may not match the subjective reality resulting from another social environment. Stark contrasts in subjective realities can cause culture shock, a kind of psychological disorientation brought about by the lack of a familiar context (Furnham and Bochner, 1989), and may have an effect on language learning (Clark, 1976). Originally thought of in a "disease" mode (Oberg, 1960), culture shock is now looked upon as having positive benefits for the individual (Bu, 1995). Two other psychological variables that may affect the learning of another language and culture are attitudes and motivation. These are discussed in Gardner and Lambert (1972).

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Psycholinguistics studies the processes used in language learning and language use (Titone and Danesi, 1985). Among the many topics explored by psycholinguistics is the examination of discourse patterns in the classroom to understand how variations in the context affect the language learning process. For example, Chaudron's (1988) analysis of teacher and student interaction in ESL classrooms demonstrates how largely teacher-oriented discourse patterns influence the learning of a second language within the culture of the classroom. Other examples are case studies by Guthrie (1987) of the effect of teacher discourse on learning in postsecondary French courses and methods by which the development of discourse can be examined in the classroom (van Lier, 1988).

In **social psychology**, one focus is the study of how society and its composition affect the learners' language development and behavior. Gardner (1985) has created a model which takes into consideration four classes of variables in second language learning: the social milieu, individual learner differences, contexts where language acquisition takes place (e.g., classroom or street), and outcomes (language, values, behavior, attitudes). One of the concerns of the model is the attitude expressed within the social milieu toward a second language, its cultural context, and language learning. Other social psychology models of language learning and acquisition concerned with similar issues are Giles et al. (1977); Lambert (1975); and Schumann (1978).

There is enormous overlap in the research of the social science disciplines into the characteristics of the learner, language learning, and the cultural milieu(x) where the language is used to communicate. Much work in these areas is currently being discussed under the category of language acquisition, focusing on the interaction of teacher and learner in the classroom. See Freed (1991); Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991); and Richards and Lockhart (1994).

The foreign language education perspective

Although a strong grammatical orientation in language teaching has traditionally dominated the content of language programs, more recently, various communicative approaches have emerged. In these approaches, language has personal and social functions. This makes the teaching of culture a requirement, rather than a refinement. No longer can it sit ignored outside the classroom door, or be included when there is "nothing else to do."

While the social sciences have broadened our perspective on culture and provided us with much new information on the complex interactions of culture and language, they cannot answer the question of that the *learning* of culture means, especially in the context of learning a language. Ultimately, it is the foreign language course designers, textbook writers, and teachers who must decide what culture means and what aspects of a particular culture to present in a particular course.

The question remains enormously complicated. It is not just the recognition of the dichotomy of "culture with a capital *C*" (high culture) and "culture with a small *c*" (...all the

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learned and shared elements...). Learning culture in the context of learning a language can mean acquiring a body of knowledge—formal, analytical learning about the nature, structure, and contributions of a particular culture. The learning of culture can also be experiential; it can be perceptional; and it can be inherently personal (Damen, 1987; Seelye, 1994). Yet most important to this discussion is that language is involved in every aspect of culture.

The following questions will prompt you to think through your own position on this complicated issue.

Culture and Language Learning

How do you define culture? Why do you define it in that way?

What is the relationship of culture and language? Why is that relationship important?

Is a "language and culture studies" program the best way to deal with the relationship of language and culture in postsecondary education? Why or why not?

Why is culture important to language learning? Can you think of any problems that may result from studying a language apart from its cultural context?

If a textbook writer chooses to emphasize "high culture" in the design of the materials, what effect will this have on the presentation of the language?

If a textbook writer uses a social sciences perspective in the treatment of culture, what features of culture might be included? How would this perspective affect the presentation of the language?

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Culture Learning

Before determining a curriculum and deciding on the related questions of how to teach and assess what is learned, there are four very important questions that need to be asked of those who would include culture as the content or one overall goal of language learning programs at the college or university level:

1. What should students in a language program know and understand, perceive, experience, and internalize about the culture(s) of the language being studied?

2. What should the students be able to do with that knowledge and those understandings, perceptions, experiences, and internalizations?

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3. Are the language and the culture taught in tandem? Is culture taught as facts, or is it taught as process to reflect the changing nature and complexity of culture? Is language taught and learned in that process?

4. What kinds of assessments can be applied in these areas so that students can demonstrate their cultural abilities?

In this section, I will discuss curriculum, teaching, and assessment. The planning of curriculum is largely concerned with establishing expected outcomes and determining course content. Teaching includes the strategies, broadly conceived, by which we engage students to attain the expected outcomes. Assessment (implying greater breadth than the term "testing") consists of the techniques used to evaluate the results of the teaching and learning in the course.

Establishing expected outcomes for the learning of culture

Much of the folklore on the learning of culture suggests that it is learned (by osmosis?) during the process of acquiring a language. Fortunately, that folklore is being supplanted with the realization that all learning has to be planned. Seelye (1994, p. 29) asserts that "Cultural instruction must be purposeful if it is to lead anywhere." If the learning of language has to be planned, so does the learning of culture. We must establish the expected outcomes for culture learning.

There are several forces at work shaping our ideas of appropriate outcomes for the learning of culture. We have already seen that foreign language departments have increasingly adopted a social sciences perspective on culture. The shift to this point of view was driven first by the emergence of audiolingual language teaching in the 1960s and more recently by the growing influence of communicative language teaching.

As a result of other recent changes, college and university language departments are undergoing a "paradigm shift" which challenges longstanding assumptions about the reasons for which languages are studied and the role of culture learning. "Whereas the focal point for American foreign language education in the past has typically been literary criticism, language departments today are increasingly occupied with linking languages to the pursuits of other fields, for example, to business, science, and engineering" (Grandin, Einbeck, and von Reinhart, 1992, p. 124; see also Kramsch, 1993, 1994). This new approach, variously referred to as languages for specific purposes, content-based instruction, and foreign languages across the curriculum, results in foreign language programs that are more discipline based. There is a concomitant shift in focus from literary studies to cultural studies—a multidisciplinary orientation to the study of a cultural area (German, French, or Hispanic Studies). In this context, the foreign language becomes a major tool for discovering new information, opening the way for language study to concentrate on meaning rather than form.

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Yet another force that is shaping expectations of appropriate outcomes for culture learning is the standards movement in the elementary and secondary schools of this country. Several standards-setting projects give evidence of the national attention now focused on the learning of culture within the context of foreign language learning in kindergarten through grade 12. The NSFLEP (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) and the AATG (American Association of Teachers of German, 1997) standards, for example, include culture learning among their five goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections (to other disciplines) Comparisons (of languages and cultures), and Communities (at home and around the world). The standards developed by the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) incorporate a model for culture learning which can be used for any language (Singerman, 1996). In all these national projects, culture is viewed from the broader perspective of the social sciences. Moreover, the culture is viewed as constantly changing, thus requiring as part of culture learning a process for constantly reviewing one's understanding of the culture.

Many of the states are following the lead of the national projects. (See as examples *Foreign Languages: Ohio's Model Competency-Based Program*, 1996; and *The Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework*, 1995). They have incorporated the same five goal areas in their state standards documents to guide local school districts in developing performance objectives and assessments in grades K-12. In all of these statements, there are strong recommendations for culture learning, especially learning that goes beyond simply learning cultural information.

While this attention to planning and assessing performance in culture learning has not had a direct impact on the colleges and universities, there is an indirect effect that will ultimately be felt. Language instructors (and teaching assistants) will need to understand how graduates of secondary school programs are prepared to function in culture. Students will be and are already entering college and university programs with more clearly demonstrable abilities in culture learning than in previous generations, and they need to continue their learning in a seamless way.

It will become increasingly necessary to align college and university objectives for language and culture learning with those of the secondary schools. (See Kramsch, 1995; replies by Byrnes, 1995, and Bernhardt, 1995; a reply by Kramsch, 1995; and Lange, 1997.) Without close connections in colleges and universities to what is taking place in K-12 education, neither the schools nor the postsecondary institutions will help students to achieve a working competence in a foreign language and its culture. Three models suggested to resolve the problem of articulation between secondary schools and colleges and universities are found in projects at the University of Minnesota (Metcalf, 1995), Ohio State University (Birckbichler, 1995), and the University of Wisconsin (Sandrock, 1995).

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Determining cultural content

There are a variety of ways to determine the cultural content of language learning programs. Some writers have advocated an approach which treats cultural content as knowledge, focusing on facts and information about the culture. Others propose models that allow examination of beliefs, values, and culturally conditioned images, and of the effect of social and situational variables on roles and behavior. Such models encourage students to explore, analyze, and evaluate features of the target culture. Several schemes for selecting and organizing cultural content are examined below.

Acquiring a body of knowledge

Nostrand (1967, 1978) has developed a taxonomy into which he has categorized cultural themes—"emotionally charged concerns" which are motivational or which have value for the individual. The resulting model intends to represent a cultural value system. In the Emergent Model, as it is called, there are six large categories (the culture, the society and its institutions, conflicts, ecology and technology, the individual, and the cross-cultural environment) under which may be classified as many as thirty topics covering relevant themes. For example, under the heading "the culture" we find: main themes, ethos or national character, assumptions about reality, verifiable knowledge, art forms, language, and paralanguage and kinesics. Basically, the model describes a culture and serves as a source of information about its values. The Emergent Model is the basis for the recommendations of the AATF National Commission on Cultural Competence (Singerman, 1996).

Setting goals and objectives

Seelye (1994, as well as two earlier editions in 1974 and 1985) makes an extremely important contribution to the development of the content of language and culture programs by setting goals and objectives for culture learning. The primary goal is stated as follows:

> All students will develop the cultural understandings, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture. (p. 29)

The six supporting objectives (p. 31) are summarized below with the key word in bold type. The many chapters of Seelye's book show how these goals can be implemented.

1. **Interest**: Students show curiosity about another culture and empathy toward its members.
2. **Who**: Students recognize that age, sex, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.

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3. **What**: Students realize that effective communication requires discovering the cultural images that are evoked in the minds of people when they think, act, and react to the world around them.
4. **Where and When**: Students recognize that situations and conventions shape behavior in important ways.
5. **Why**: Students understand that people act as they do because they are using allowed societal options to satisfy basic physical and psychological needs.
6. **Exploration**: Students evaluate generalizations about the target culture in terms of the evidence to substantiate them. Students have the skills to locate and organize information about the culture from a variety of sources—library, mass media, people, and personal observation.

These statements include a variety of contents: curiosity, place of roles and social variables, culturally conditioned images, situational variables and conventions, cultural patterns, and evaluation processes. They are quite different from a focus on facts and information about a culture as in the Nostrand Emergent Model or the AATF Commission recommendations for culture content.

Integrating language and culture

Many times culture is treated as an afterthought in a language learning program. However, Stern (1983) taught us to think about four interwoven syllabi in the language learning process: language, culture, communication, and general language education (learning how to learn) would all be integrated with one another. Culture, like language, would have its own defined content, progression, and levels of competency.

Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) have pushed Stern's idea of the integration of culture into language programs into a realizable process where culture and language are equal partners. Their approach to culture learning comprises eight interactive stages conducted jointly by teacher and students in a loose progression:

1. choice of a cultural theme;
2. presentation of the theme through a wide variety of means (pictures, bulletin boards, slides, films, videotape, live interviews, etc.);
3. dialogue to elicit student perceptions of the theme and to exemplify it;
4. clarification of language learning needs (i.e., what language functions, notions, structures, syntax, registers, and vocabulary are needed to pursue the theme?);
5. presentation and practice of language learning aspects together with cultural phenomena appropriate for the theme;
6. verification or rejection of student perceptions (see 3) through the examination of a variety of different sources;
7. examination of cultural awareness through questions which contrast target and native cultures, analyze language used, and explore the importance of context, gender, time,

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class, and race in order that students articulate the process(es) they experienced in verifying perceptions; and

8. evaluation of language and cultural proficiency through the use of language and presentational strategies to demonstrate awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the culture.

Using a process approach

What level of proficiency in the target culture should we expect our students to attain? Is it enough for them to have an appreciation and intellectual understanding of the culture? Or should they strive toward the goal of empathy with and integration into the culture? Allen (1985) addresses the concept of cultural proficiency. She argues that students not become French, German, or Hispanic, but that they acquire an awareness of and appreciation for another culture. Allen believes that awareness and appreciation of another culture are achieved through progressive student discovery in three content categories: information, experience, and authenticity. In each category there is a progression. For information, from isolated facts to cultural patterns; for experience, from survival to the gradual incorporation of social and professional dimensions of the culture; and for authenticity, from the concrete (e.g., the tourist environment) to the abstract (e.g., the development of empathy). Development is accomplished in all three categories through the acquisition and use of behaviors, knowledge, and skills, leading to a comparative process through which learners can understand another culture as well as their own.

In further development along these lines, Allen and Lange (1996) have articulated a *process* approach for culture learning. Within thematic categories (survival, social, and socio-professional), four phases of a recurring process (observation, exploration, expansion, and evaluation) provide learners with opportunity to use language in culture learning.

- In the observation phase, thematic cultural phenomena from both C_1 (the students' culture) and C_2 (the target culture) are examined, identified as useful, and described in detail. Students' reactions to the phenomena are also recorded.
- In exploration, learners compare and contrast the C_1/C_2 phenomena and examine their original perceptions as well. Hypotheses to account for the phenomena in both cultures are formulated and more information is gathered.
- In expansion, learners examine new data, describe what has been found, adding to the original observations and perceptions, and refine the original hypotheses for C_1 and C_2.
- In evaluation, learners analyze and synthesize information on the theme across both cultures, confirm or reject their original hypotheses, and examine their original perceptions to see if they need to change as well.

The importance of the Allen (1985) and the Allen and Lange (1996) contributions is that they include the contrast of cultural knowledge as an important element of content in the learning of both C_1 and C_2. In particular, the Allen and Lange process provides the students experience with the contrasts while they are coming to understand them. Moreover, it

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integrates language and culture learning, with language being learned through cultural experience.

Developing cultural sensitivity

Taking an intercultural studies perspective, Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (1996) have proposed a model for development of cultural sensitivity as the content of culture learning. The six stages of the model are classified under two rubrics: ethnocentric (denial, defense, and minimization) and ethnorelative (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). The ethnocentric stages are defined as follows:

> Denial of difference is the inability of the individual to recognize cultural differences because the constructs to which the differences refer are not part of the individual's repertoire; thus, the differences are denied. "As long as we speak the same language, there's no problem."
>
> Defense against difference operates when the individual sees differences but evaluates them negatively through overt stereotyping. "How stupid to say 'grandmother' in that way. Our way is better!"
>
> In the minimization of difference, the individual sees superficial cultural differences but wants to minimize those differences by suggesting that "Deep down, we are all the same no matter where we are from."

The ethnorelative stages are described as follows:

> In the acceptance of difference stage, individuals appreciate cultural difference and acknowledge that other cultures provide alternative resolutions to human existence. "The more difference the better—more difference equals more creative ideas!" In this stage, individuals can understand cultural phenomena within context and elaborate on them.
>
> In adaptation to difference, individuals have the ability to see through the eyes of the "other," and to develop the communication skills necessary to communicate with the "other." "The more I understand this culture, the better I get at the language."
>
> In the final stage, integration of difference, individuals find themselves in the process of creating an adaptable identity, not based on any one culture, which allows them to evaluate situations from a "multiple" perspective and communicate constructively with the "other." "Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of view." This latter stage would probably be difficult to attain in the classroom.

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The contribution of the Bennett, Bennett, and Allen model is that from it, individuals can develop cultural sensitivity. It is possible to observe this development take place in ways similar to cognitive or language development. Thus, we can plan for, teach toward, and evaluate such development. Moreover, it is potentially possible to place many of the other approaches to cultural content that have been discussed here, as well as many of the instructional strategies to be discussed below, within the frame of this model.

The following questions will lead you to think about the appropriate cultural content for a language course.

Cultural Content for Language Courses

If you were to order in importance the ways in which cultural content in language courses may be selected and organized, how would you order the following (1 = most important, 5 = least important:

- development of goals
- knowledge about the culture
- ways of learning about the culture
- integration of language and culture
- multiculturalism
- development of cultural sensitivity

Why have you ordered them in that way? Why these preferences?

What particular bias(es) do they indicate? Why these biases?

Why would you give or not give preference to the development of goals as the most important determiner of the cultural content of a language and culture program?

What cultural goals would you choose to include in a language learning course? Why?

Which would you exclude? Why?

Teaching culture

This section will treat the teaching of culture from two complementary perspectives. The discussion of teaching culture as information will show how information may be conveyed through lectures and other devices such as culture capsules, culture clusters, cultural incidents and assimilators, and cultural minidramas. The discussion of integrating language and culture as process will examine the process of refinement of hypotheses about cultural themes.

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Teaching culture as information

Probably the easiest way in which to impart information on any subject in college and university studies is to tell students what they should know. In the history of college teaching, this approach goes back to the Middle Ages and still is used today. As in many disciplines, the lecture is used to give information on culture, whether in large or small classes. The instructor imparts cultural information, usually in the students' native language. Students take notes. Once the notes have been taken, it is believed, the cultural knowledge has been learned. Tests are developed, administered, and scored to verify the learning. Grades are given as indicators of who has the most cultural knowledge. This is an efficient and cost-effective system, and it is a system which has enormous credibility. If you "teach culture" in this way, some of the following guidelines could make it very productive:

1. Keep the lecture in the target language.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Make it informative.
4. Integrate it into the daily lesson.
5. Focus it on a specific targeted aspect of culture.
6. Give it humor.
7. Illustrate it with pictures, charts, slides, and authentic objects.
8. Follow up with a debriefing using questions in the target language.

Other kinds of devices for giving information have been created which allow students a more active role. These are capsules, clusters, incidents and assimilators, and minidramas. These instructional forms are largely text based and are constructed with a core cultural item or items. Each may be easily developed but should be reviewed by other instructors in order to verify the information in them and ensure that the expected responses are valid. An added advantage of using these devices is that students may be involved in both the research and writing of them. The devices are discussed below.

Culture capsules. This strategy is based on a minimal contrast (C_1/C_2) of features in the students' culture and the target culture. This contrast can be described in a paragraph or two in the target language (L_2) with as much detail as possible, keeping in mind the proficiency level of the students. It is a good idea to accompany the text with drawings, pictures, or other authentic objects to illustrate the contrast. Simple and more advanced versions of the same contrast can be used as students become more proficient in the language. The capsule can be used as material for listening or reading comprehension and then as the basis for communicative activities such as question and answer practice; simple rewriting or retelling of the content; oral or written stories about one's self, family, or friends; letters to a pen pal (classmate); the basis for a short research project; or a description of reactions to the contrast. The capsule can also be used in small groups to generate skits or role plays. Any activity should relate to the contrast of C_1/C_2 and use the L_2 as much as possible. Certainly, one of the final activities should be a summary of what students have learned from the capsule and the ensuing activities. For further references on

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the development and use of culture capsules, see Omaggio-Hadley (1993), Seelye (1994), and Taylor and Sorenson (1961). Commercially prepared culture capsules are available as models which instructors can adapt to their own purposes. See Miller and Bishop (1979); Miller, Drayton, and Lyon (1979); and Miller and Loiseau (1974).

Culture clusters. In presenting simple contrasts in single culture capsules, there is a danger of unwittingly creating stereotypes. In order to avoid such stereotyping, Meade and Morain (1973) developed the concept of culture clusters, which involve anywhere from two to four culture capsules. They show contrasts between C_1 and C_2 in two to four aspects of the same topic, thus allowing for presentation of more information than with a single culture capsule. As with a single capsule, clusters can be accompanied by any kind of illustration—pictures, slides, objects, even people who could provide information or participate in a simulation dramatizing the information in the cluster. Again, the L_2 is used as much as possible.

To develop culture clusters, Seelye (1994) suggests that one think about some particular aspect of life in the target culture that could include two to four segments. Each segment is then clarified through a culture capsule. Finally, the capsules may be turned into a simulation for presentation. Students could even help write the capsules. Any of the activities suggested above for the single culture capsule may be used for clusters as well. See Seelye (1994) for other examples.

Cultural incidents and assimilators. This concept was developed by learning psychologists (Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis, 1971) to prepare individuals to function in cross-cultural or intercultural contexts. Culture assimilators apply behavioral psychology to cross-cultural communication through programmed learning. The key elements of culture assimilators are cultural incidents or specific intercultural interactions which seem to puzzle the participants, who are from two different cultures (see examples in Seelye, 1994). Each incident motivates analysis and explanation. After the description of the incident, four plausible explanations or distractors are offered, one of which is more plausible than the others. With each choice, the reader is given feedback on the chosen answer and is redirected to the text to understand why the choice is correct or not correct. Further, a separate extended explanation may also help clarify the situation beyond the distractor feedback. An assimilator, which may be a compilation of 50 to 100 cultural incidents, can be prepared so that it covers some of the major cultural miscommunications that might happen within a culture. An example would be the cultural assimilator for Honduras (Symonds et al., 1967) as cited in Seelye (1994).

As with culture capsules and clusters, the descriptions of incidents may be written in L_1. Assimilators encourage language use by both individuals and groups. Individual students can read them (or listen to them, if they are recorded) as both language input and cultural information. If advanced enough in language proficiency, with guidance students might write about incidents from their own intercultural experiences. Groups might also create incidents, tell their own stories to one another, or develop a skit based on some experience(s) with

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miscommunication. The main activity is probably the assimilator itself, or parts of it, as it fits into the cultural goals for the course. But you should not hesitate to experiment and use the assimilator as creatively as possible.

Although culture assimilators may actively involve the learner and may be enjoyable and effective in explaining miscommunication, they require care in writing so as not to convey misleading information. Whether you create your own incidents or use students' experiences as the basis for writing them, native speakers should be asked to validate the miscommunication being depicted.

Cultural minidramas. As in the culture assimilator, the problem central to the cultural minidrama is that of miscommunication. However, in the minidrama, there are up to five episodes consisting of skits or simulations. Each episode contains an example, or maybe more than one, where problems of communication lead to misunderstanding. The precise cause of the miscommunication is not revealed until the last episode. After each episode, a neutral discussion between students and teacher provides students with the opportunity of "self-confrontation." To force the confrontation, the teacher might ask both broad questions ("What do you think about this episode?") and narrow ones ("Is there miscommunication in this episode?"). Both the discussion and the experience of the minidrama provide students with the opportunity to encounter the sometimes deceptive nature of intercultural communication through a series of steps until the cause of the miscommunication is revealed.

In terms of classroom use, the best practice for language input and listening or reading comprehension would be through the presentation and discussion of the episodes in the L_2. However, best practice may sometimes not be possible, particularly if the minidrama is used with first or second semester learners. Both the broad and narrow questions for the end-of-episode discussions should be designed so that students could answer them in L_2, allowing for some focused language practice, but also providing learners with a relatively free and open opportunity to express themselves. Of course, students could work in groups in order to develop responses to discussion questions. Most importantly, the minidrama is an activity where students can put their intellectual, cultural, and language abilities together in order to figure out what the communication problem really is. Seelye (1994) has excellent examples of cultural minidramas.

Each of these four devices for learning culture adds to students' information about the C_2. Here are some questions for you to consider regarding their use.

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Devices for Learning Culture

culture capsules • culture clusters • cultural incidents and assimilators
cultural minidramas

For what kinds of cultural learning objectives might you use any of these four devices?

What possibilities for learning of language and culture can these devices provide that lecturing cannot?

Is/are any of the devices better suited for some kinds of culture learning than others? What about language learning?

Can you think of any practical limitations on the use of any of the devices? Consider the resources needed to support each device, the demands placed on students' language proficiency, and other factors.

Think about the textbook and other instructional materials with which you are currently teaching. In what ways and at what points in the lesson could you use these devices for the teaching and learning of culture?

Integrating language and culture as process: hypothesis refinement

Much credit goes to Seelye (1994) for the concept of "hypothesis refinement," which is largely contained in "Exploration," the sixth of his supporting objectives (pp. 141-161). Jorstad (1981), Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), and Allen and Lange (1996) have significantly embellished this idea. Jorstad (1981) provides a six-step process in which hypothesis refinement is a primarily cognitive process (Bloom, 1956) accomplished in L_1.

Adding to this cognitive-domain process, Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) include the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964), thereby admitting to the process the concept of valuing, an appreciation of value systems, and the development of a personal value system. In addition, their seven-step approach to hypothesis refinement integrates the learning of language as part of culture learning. In their process, students:

1. form perceptions of a feature of the culture;
2. state their perceptions;
3. seek multiple sources for information on the statement (media, print, realia);
4. examine and analyze the information from the sources;
5. modify the original statement and seek further data for refinement;
6. examine a related feature in their own culture using the same process; and

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7. compare the refined statement about their own culture with the statement about the related feature in the C_2.

Allen and Lange (1996) go one step further in making hypothesis refinement a recursive, cognitive and affective, developmental process linked to thematic material from both the C_1 and C_2. This addition brings the hypothesis refinement and language learning process closer to the development of specific materials for culture and language learning in the classroom.

Hypothesis refinement, a composite instructional strategy for dealing with culture and even language learning, contains many sub-strategies which can be used within the several hypothesis refinement frameworks just discussed. The strategies are used largely to gather information. Yet, how that information is used is important as well. Five of those information gathering strategies and their uses are treated below, namely the use of observation, artifacts, interviews, documents, and literary texts.

Observation. Students learn to focus actively on what they see. Observing any object, photograph, drawing, painting, slide, bulletin board display, film, videotape, videodisc, or audiotape, they are guided by careful questioning to describe what they see. The description could be given orally or in written form and in either L_1 or L_2; even beginners can give simple descriptions in L_2. Here are some sample questions to guide students with observation. The questions also include affect as an element:

What do you see?
What are the details?
How are these details different from your experience?
What is your reaction to the details and the differences from your experience?

These questions prompt students to observe carefully, describe in detail, and then state reactions to what is observed and described, based on some awareness of and experience with the object. The discussion of the observations can be accomplished in small groups, which allows for a variation of description and reaction, showing that cultural perceptions can differ.

Cultural artifacts. The use of a cultural artifact (any unfamiliar object) fits directly into hypothesis refinement through observation, description, and reaction. Following a description elicited by questions like those just suggested, further questions such as the following will help develop a hypothesis:

How was this object constructed? By whom? When?
For what purpose or function in this culture?
Who uses it in this culture?
What is its broader meaning in this culture?
Can you find it in your own culture?

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Does it serve the same purpose?
Does it have the same meaning?

Notice that the teacher is not required to know everything about this artifact or this culture! Students are asked to do cognitive and affective intellectual work that helps them experience this culture in their own classroom.

Interviews of native speakers on a particular theme or topic provide perceptions of the theme from a culturally individualistic perspective. It is important that instructors and students prepare for such interviews in advance. Students might develop questions on the theme in the L_2, based on their experience, impressions, and perceptions of the topic at that point. Interviews can take place in the classroom in a whole group setting or, if more than one native speaker is interviewed at a time, in smaller groups. Interviews should be recorded if possible to allow students to confirm their understanding during follow-up activities. After the interview has taken place, students work in groups, analyzing the information obtained from the interview and using it to revise their earlier hypotheses. The tape(s) of the interview(s) should be preserved for later use by other classes.

Documents of a wide variety can be used as information from the C_1 or C_2 for contrastive and comparative use, depending on the theme. The documents can range from magazine ads to charts, graphs, and schedules, to newspapers and magazines, to any kind of document that fits the theme and the imagination of the teacher and students. In gathering information on a cultural theme, students should be encouraged to examine a wide variety of sources, which are then analyzed to provide a composite picture. For example, on the topic of alternative medicine in French culture, ads of all kinds, cartoons, articles in popular magazines and newspapers, brochures, slides, etc., provide a variety of data. From these documents a hypothesis as to the use of alternative medicine in French culture can be refined or a comparison/contrast be made with U.S. culture. Many of the more formal types of reference materials may be found in libraries, and libraries and language departments usually subscribe to some of the standard popular magazines and newspapers, so sources could be available if sought out.

Literary texts are certainly sources of information on cultural behavior patterns and values. Galloway (1992) offers a four-stage process (thinking, looking, learning, integrating) for reading authentic texts which relates to hypothesis refinement models.

Thinking: Students bring out the cultural schema for C_1, which can be used as the backdrop for thinking about C_2.

Looking: Students examine the structure and function of the text to notice how the major features of the text may contribute to its meaning. Example: What is the title of the text? What is its possible meaning? Why does this text have headings? What do they contribute?

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Learning: Students discover information, develop hypotheses, and examine cross-cultural contrasts; in short, they go through the process of hypothesis refinement.

Integrating: Students begin to develop an awareness of and appreciation for the value system of C_2 by contrasting it with C_1. They reflect on and hypothesize about the norms and values of the C_2 in relation to C_1 and arrive at a broader understanding of culture.

Appendices A-D of Galloway's article provide detailed tasks for each of these stages. Of course the stages may be used not only with literary texts, but any text in another language.

Processes for Hypothesis Refinement

Seelye (1994) introduces the notion of hypothesis refinement as a means by which students may develop a properly grounded understanding of another culture. Later writers (Crawford-Lange and Lange, 1984; Allen and Lange, 1996) have extended the process so as to include affective factors and to integrate the learning of language and culture.

Do you think that your students would be satisfied by a process of culture learning that does not include a consideration of value systems and the development of a personal value system? Why?

Would they be satisfied to study the culture and talk about it without trying to use the target language during their explorations? Why?

Can you foresee any difficulties your students might have if you took them through the seven-step process for hypothesis refinement outlined by Crawford-Lange and Lange?

Consider the five strategies for information gathering described here: observation, artifacts, interviews, documents, and literary texts. Is/are any of these sources of information better suited to the Crawford-Lange and Lange hypothesis refinement process?

Can you think of other strategies for information gathering that are not discussed here? What are their advantages? Disadvantages? What do they contribute to the other five?

Assessing culture learning

Techniques for the testing the learning of culture as information are relatively well known. Valette (1977) shows several ways (identification, matching, short answer or short description, and multiple choice—to which true-false tests could be added) in which the testing of information on aspects of geography, cultural awareness, etiquette, and values can

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be achieved, *if* these cultural aspects are treated as knowledge or fact. The more difficult issue of assessing growth in the affective domain (perceiving or attending, responding, valuing, organization of values, characterization by a value system) are not treated in manuals on the testing of language (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Cohen, 1994). Alternative forms of assessment have to be considered for these purposes.

In his handling of assessment, Seelye (1994) considers the performances that are designed for end-of-course competencies as the key to any assessment, whether culture is taught as information or as process. In other words, if knowledge of geographical facts is an end-of-course competency, the well known forms of objective assessment can be used. If cultural awareness is an end-of-course competency, then it is up to the instructor (together with the students) to determine what aspects of awareness will be achieved and how students will be evaluated. The conditions under which such a course outcome is assessed include specific designation of the outcome, the conditions under which the outcome is to be demonstrated, and criteria by which the outcome is to be evaluated. Two examples will illustrate this approach to assessment:

Example 1

Outcome: Students are curious about the local importance of French culture.

Demonstration of outcome: After instruction on the importance of French influences in the world, students are given sources of basic information about French place names in their state. In small groups, they seek information on ten place names and each group reports back on its findings.

Evaluation criteria:

- completion of task (yes-no);
- quality of the information reported (defined scale of 1-5);
- perceptions of the importance of the information (defined scale 1-5); and
- student interest in the knowledge (Does it matter? defined scale 1-5).

Example 2

Outcome: Students recognize the value of gathering data as contributing to an appreciation of why a theme is important in a culture.

Demonstration of outcome: A group of students use hypothesis refinement to examine the theme "Alternative Medicine."

Evaluation criteria:

- the range of information found (the number of different sources used);
- the quality of the information or its contribution to the understanding of the theme (defined scale of 1-5);

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- the change in perceptions as a result of more information (defined scale 1-5);
- student perceptions of the process (How does the process work? defined scale 1-5); and
- effect on student values (How have I [the student] changed? open-ended question).

The assessments in both examples do not specify right or wrong options, because in these cases there are no right or wrong answers. Instead, scaled options reflecting perceptions are used. The examples were chosen to specifically illustrate that since culture changes, since culture is variable from individual to individual, and since cultural perceptions are also variable, more flexible and open means of assessment are both necessary and appropriate.

In any case, outcomes for cultural learning need to be planned for both informational and process-oriented outcomes. In this planning, both objective testing and alternative forms of assessment play important roles. Here are some questions and activities to help you reflect on assessment of culture learning.

Assessment of Culture Learning

Describe a facts-oriented culture learning outcome. For each of the following types of objective test item, create a sample question to assess factual knowledge about the target culture: short answer, multiple choice, true-false, fill in the blank.

Describe a process-oriented culture learning outcome that you could use with your students. How will your students demonstrate the outcome? State three to four criteria that could be used to evaluate the outcome.

Treatment of Culture in Language Textbooks

This discussion of the treatment of culture in language learning materials examines three up-to-date college foreign language textbooks—one each in French, German, and Spanish. These books are representative of some of the current texts for the learning of foreign languages. Obviously, not all college texts are represented; these three were chosen simply because they were available. In the following discussion, the intent is not to judge the materials, but rather to describe how culture is treated, using the frame of reference established in earlier sections of this module.

Parallèles: Communication et culture

In the French example (Allen and Fouletier-Smith, 1995), culture is a major element of the text from the very first sentence in the preface to the organization of the materials

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themselves. The authors talk specifically about a "method for teaching culture and development of skills of cultural observation and analysis" (p. xvii). Each unit contains a section, "Parallèles," which is organized around observation (asking questions, gathering information) and reflection (reflection and analysis, using contrast and comparison with the students' own [U.S.] culture). Although the learning of language is not necessarily always an integral part of the cultural learning, of the three textbooks considered here, this one comes the closest to treating the learning of culture as a process of hypothesis refinement. The German and Spanish examples are more traditional in their approach.

Kontakte: A communicative approach

In the German text (Terrell, Tschirner, Nikolai, and Genzmer, 1992), the introduction for teachers indicates that there are "speaking situations" complemented by sections entitled "Kultur, "Landeskunde," and "Informationen," which provide students with cultural information. However, the introduction for students does not mention culture learning as an objective. Within the textbook, different pieces of information are presented (e.g., about health insurance, supermarkets, what to do in a restaurant, the Green Party) in a format that can be used for a variety of purposes, such as reading and listening. If anything is done actively with these materials in terms of culture learning, it is confined to asking and answering questions about the culture topic or maybe some application of the information contained in these isolated pieces to the life of the individual student. In its approach to the teaching of culture, this textbook basically relies on simply presenting cultural information.

Dos mundos

The basic focus of the Spanish example (Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, and Muñoz, 1994) is on teaching the language by means of a method call the Natural Approach. In the teacher's introduction, culture is mentioned as a contextual issue, but not as a major objective. In the students' introduction, culture is only hinted at or assumed as part of the learning content. In each unit, there is a section that presents information on "el mundo hispano." There are also reading selections which provide information about the Hispanic scene, or there are cultural notes. These sections are largely isolated from the remainder of the text. As in the German textbook, the basic manner in which the information is treated is through questions and answers, and the approach to the teaching of culture is the presentation of culture as information.

The following questions will help you to analyze textbooks for the teaching of your language to determine the approach that is used for the teaching of culture.

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Treatment of Culture in Language Textbooks

Find two or three recently published textbooks for your language. (One of these could be the textbook from which you are currently teaching.) Examine the introduction of each book for the author's statement of objectives. Do the objectives (explicitly or implicitly) include culture learning?

If the cultural objectives are explicitly stated, do they present culture learning as a matter of gaining factual knowledge or as a process of developing and refining hypotheses about the culture?

What text structure contains activity on these cultural objectives? Where is this structure in the text? What activities does it contain? Do you think that the activities are likely to lead toward the author's stated cultural objectives? If not, how would you modify the activities to make them more attuned to the objectives?

Are the cultural sections of the textbook an integral part of the language learning program? If not, how can you modify the materials for a better integration of language and culture learning?

What techniques does the author use for assessing culture learning? Do you feel that these techniques are appropriate to the stated objectives? If not, how would you change the form of assessment to make it more appropriate?

Conclusion

This discussion has adopted a social sciences perspective on culture in order to expand the concept to encompass "the total way of life of [a] societal group" (Brooks, 1960, p. 80). This conceptualization includes material culture—from the most lowly product to the most refined, as well as value systems, ways of believing and behaving, shared knowledge, and more. Language is, of course, one aspect of culture and is the medium for understanding, sharing, and negotiating meaning for *all* aspects of culture.

There is enormous overlap in the research of the social sciences into the characteristics of language, the users of language, and the cultural milieux where the language is used to communicate. Thus the social sciences perspective not only allows us to broaden our view of culture, but also provides insights into the learning and use of language. The social sciences can help us understand how:

- language varies in form and use within its social and cultural contexts;
- society and its composition affect language development and behavior;

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- culturally determined attitudes and individually experienced motivations can help or hinder the learning and use of the language;
- differences in culturally determined world views can cause culture shock, which in turn may have a telling impact on the learning of the language; and
- the culture of the classroom affects the language learning process.

The role and importance of the learning of culture in language courses have evolved in response to several trends. The growth of communicative approaches to the teaching of languages and the movement toward establishing content and performance standards for the learning of foreign languages have made the teaching of culture a requirement rather than a refinement. Another trend is seen in the increase in multidisciplinary studies of cultural areas. Language learning is enhanced by knowledge from other disciplines and language in turn becomes a major tool for learning new information.

The two principal approaches to selecting and teaching cultural content differ mainly in terms of a product versus process perspective. One approach treats cultural content as knowledge, focusing on facts and information about the culture. The other emphasizes exploration, analysis, and evaluation of features of the target culture. Regardless of the approach, just as for language learning, it is important to set goals and objectives for the learning of culture. For maximum effectiveness, the learning of language should be interwoven with the learning of culture. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) and Allen and Lange (1996) have shown how this may be done. Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (1996) show how learners can develop a cultural sensitivity that allows them to evaluate cultural differences from a multiple perspective and communicate constructively with members of another culture.

Techniques and strategies for the teaching of culture also reflect the product versus process distinction. Facts and information about a culture have traditionally been conveyed through lectures, a technique that casts students in a rather passive role. In contrast, devices such as culture capsules, culture clusters, cultural incidents and assimilators, and cultural minidramas require active participation from the students. Students may become even more involved if they are encouraged and guided to create these devices themselves. The strategy of hypothesis refinement can be a cognitive and affective process that permits integration of language and culture and requires active student participation. Students gather data by means of observation, study of cultural artifacts, interviews of representatives of the culture, and examination of documents and literary texts. They form hypotheses about the target culture, refine the hypotheses, and make comparisons and contrasts between the target culture and their own.

The importance of goals and objectives for culture learning is seen again in the approach to assessing culture learning. If culture learning has been approached through the learning of facts and information, students' grasp of such knowledge may be tested by well known item forms such as true-false, multiple choice, identification, short answer, and the like. The means of assessing the growth of cultural awareness and sensitivity are less well

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known and require a more open-ended and subjective approach. The teacher and students together can engage in defining the desired outcome of a process, stating the conditions under which the outcome is to be demonstrated, and devising criteria by which the outcome is to be evaluated.

In three recently published language textbooks examined within the frame of reference established here, one was found to treat the learning of culture as a process of hypothesis refinement; the other two rely on presenting culture as information to be learned. Evidence such as this makes it clear that the concept of culture learning in foreign language classrooms is still evolving. While teachers and students might wish for firmer guidelines and more supportive materials, this absence of *a priori* limits permits experimentation and innovation, with teachers and students working together to establish objectives, determine content, and evaluate outcomes. Since culture learning involves the intellect in both cognitive and affective development, teachers and learners can all grow as they jointly explore their own and another culture.

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Suggested Additional Reading

These two works are classics in anthropology and quite readable introductions to the concept of culture.

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